



Board Report

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OPERATIONS, SAFETY, AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE COMMITTEE SEPTEMBER 16, 2021

SUBJECT: MOTION 22.1: NEXTGEN BUS SPEED ENGINEERING WORKING GROUP STATUS UPDATE

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE the status report in response to Motion 22.1 entitled NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group (July 2019). This update provides details regarding a technical working group appointed by Metro and its efforts to coordinate with a complementary group from the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT) to develop a work program to improve bus priority and assess the need to coordinate with other jurisdictions and municipal operators.

ISSUE

In July 2019, the Board approved Motion 22.1 entitled NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group as part of the NextGen Service Concept. This motion requests the following:

- A. Develop a list of priority bus supportive infrastructure projects needed to support the NextGen bus service plan, with an emphasis on near-term improvements that can be implemented concurrently with each phase of NextGen;
- B. Form a NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group co-chaired by the Metro CEO and the General Manager (GM) of the Los Angeles Department of Transportation (LADOT), or their designees, and establish a regular meeting schedule, at least monthly;
- C. Assess the need for coordination with additional local jurisdictions and municipal operators where bus delay hotspots exist; and
- D. Report back to the Operations, Safety and Customer Experience Committee on the above in April 2020, and quarterly thereafter.

This report provides a status update as of FY22 Q1 on the response to Motion 22.1.

BACKGROUND

In July 2018, the Board adopted Motion 38.1, endorsing travel speed, service frequency, and system reliability as the highest priority service design objectives for the NextGen Bus Study. These

objectives were incorporated into the NextGen Regional Service Concept (Attachment A) approved by the Board in July 2019, which provides the framework for restructuring Metro's bus routes and schedules.

Concurrent to the approval of the NextGen Regional Service Concept, the Board also approved Motion 22.1: Engineering Working Group (Attachment A), which provides direction to staff to establish a partnership between Metro and LADOT to identify, design, fund and implement transit supportive infrastructure to speed up transit service as part of the NextGen Bus Plan.

The Metro CEO appointed a Technical Working Group focused on identifying, planning, designing and implementing bus speed and reliability improvements. Metro Service Planning, in close partnership with LADOT's equivalent technical team, consisting of Traffic Operations, Active Transportation, Vision Zero, and Transportation Planning Groups, has been meeting regularly (every 2-4 weeks) to ensure ongoing coordination and advancement of the program. Additional Metro departments (e.g. Communications, Planning, OMB, OEI, Program Management, Security), as well as other municipal traffic departments and transit operators, will be engaged as needed when specific projects have been defined and advanced towards design and implementation.

An External Affairs Working Group was also established as a subcommittee of the Technical Working Group. It is comprised of staff from Metro Community Relations, LADOT External Affairs, StreetsLA, the Los Angeles Mayor's Office, Metro Board Staff, and Metro Service Planning. Their work focuses on coordinating to communicate with and prepare communities for coming improvements, including identifying and addressing potential impacts, and coordinating outreach and engagement efforts for these projects.

At major milestones and as needed, the Technical Working Group will report on progress to the Metro CEO and LADOT's GM, and/or their designees, to seek direction on goals and objectives of the Technical Working Group, as well as policy guidance on balancing priorities for roadway and curb space.

DISCUSSION

Since the last update provided to the Board on January 21, 2021, the Technical Working Group has met regularly on the following:

Alvarado Street Bus Priority Lane

In partnership with LADOT and Caltrans, the Technical Working Group began repurposing the peak hour, curbside mixed flow lane into a bus priority lane on Alvarado Street from 7th Street to Sunset Boulevard.

- LADOT segment between Westlake/MacArthur Park B/D Line (Red/Purple) Station and US-101 Freeway was completed in June 2021
- Remaining Caltrans segment between US-101 Freeway and Sunset Boulevard is expected to be completed by October 2021, pending Caltrans approval of the projects encroachment permit application

- Community outreach was conducted from January through June 2021, including a rider engagement effort on Line 200 and at the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station in early March, a virtual community meeting held on March 17, 2021, an additional round of rider engagement on Line 200 and at the Westlake/MacArthur Park Station in late May, and construction outreach to area businesses and stakeholders in June
- Significant equity benefits for transit riders on Alvarado Street (includes data from the Fall 2019 Customer Survey for Line 200 riders)
 - Over 12,000 boardings per weekday (pre-COVID) on Alvarado
 - 94% of bus riders on Alvarado do not own or have access to a car and therefore rely on Metro bus service
 - 77% of bus riders on Alvarado use Metro bus service at least five days per week
 - 63% of bus riders on Alvarado are below the poverty line
 - 96% of bus riders on Alvarado are people of color (POC)
- Metro will be evaluating benefits and tradeoffs of this project once the remaining Caltrans segment is completed
- There are no significant issues to report following the installation of the current segment

Grand Avenue & Olive Street Bus Priority Lanes

In May 2020, LADOT reported that the Working Group identified Grand Avenue (southbound) and Olive Street (northbound) as high frequency bus corridors that would benefit from bus priority lanes. In coordination with StreetsLA's ADAPT resurfacing program, LADOT designed and relocated the existing bike lanes on both one-way corridors to the left side of the roadway to reduce conflicts with transit and allow for future bus priority lanes.

- Project expected to be completed by December 2021
- Community outreach began in early August 2021, and included a rider engagement and survey effort on various high-ridership bus lines along Grand Av and Olive St during the week of August 23rd, a virtual community meeting held on August 31, 2021, and continued outreach to key stakeholders and bus riders in preparation of project installation
 - Strong support from 328 in-person surveyed Metro bus riders along these corridors:
 - 86% ride a bus along this corridor regularly (at least weekly or daily)
 - 7 in 10 riders experience traffic delays on Grand Av or Olive St
 - Nearly every rider stated that having a more reliable trip time along this corridor would encourage them to use the bus more
- Proposed hours are weekdays between 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM
- Typically, over 60 buses per hour use either Grand Avenue or Olive Street, which equates to one bus every minute
- Significant equity benefits for transit riders on Grand Avenue and Olive Street (includes data from the Fall 2019 Customer Survey for riders on bus lines that use Grand Av and Olive St)
 - Over 120,000 boardings per weekday (pre-COVID) on Metro lines that serve Grand Ave and Olive St
 - 51% of bus riders on Grand/Olive are below the poverty line
 - 80% of bus riders on Grand/Olive are people of color (POC)

- Benefits to bus riders using routes from South LA, San Gabriel Valley and Gateway Cities
- Benefits to municipal transit operators including LADOT DASH, Foothill Transit Commuter Express and Torrance Transit 4X

La Brea Avenue Bus Priority Lanes

Further, the Technical Working Group identified La Brea Avenue, from Sunset Boulevard to Coliseum Street, as the next corridor to study for bus priority lanes. This six-mile-long corridor has a high weekday ridership of 12,500 boardings. With the NextGen Bus Plan service improvements, Line 212 on La Brea Av would see a doubling of peak-hour weekday service from every 15 minutes to every 7 ½ minutes. The existing peak hour, curbside mixed flow lanes would be converted into peak-hour bus priority lanes to support the increased service levels.

- Proposed hours on weekdays between 7:00 AM - 10:00 AM, 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM
- Under NextGen Bus Plan improvements, 8 buses per hour would use La Brea Avenue per direction, which equates to one bus every 7 ½ minutes per direction
- Significant equity benefits for transit riders on La Brea Avenue (includes data from the Fall 2019 Customer Survey for Line 212 riders)
 - Over 12,500 boardings per weekday (pre-COVID) on La Brea Avenue
 - 76% of bus riders on La Brea Avenue do not own or have access to a car and therefore rely on Metro bus service
 - 76% of bus riders on La Brea Avenue use Metro bus service at least five days per week
 - 90% of bus riders on La Brea Avenue are people of color (POC)
- Benefits to riders accessing jobs, residences, and businesses along the La Brea Avenue corridor
 - Over 100,000 residents and nearly 40,000 jobs within a 10-minute walk of proposed bus priority lanes
- Provides direct connections to E Line (Expo) and future D Line (Purple) extension

Community outreach for the La Brea Avenue Bus Priority Lanes will begin in Fall 2021. Implementation is expected in Winter/Spring of 2022.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

This quarterly update does not have a financial impact to report.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Improving transit service by reallocating priority for single occupant motorists and renewing focus on transit riders increases access to opportunity for groups who may not have those opportunities today.

Since Metro's adoption of the Metro Equity Platform Framework in February 2018, various community-based organizations have expressed the community's desire for equity to be integrated into the community outreach and engagement process. As such, Metro will ensure an open and transparent public participation process that empowers low-income communities and communities of

color, by removing barriers to participation in decision-making that affects these communities.

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, it is anticipated that future community outreach and engagement will incorporate both significant virtual and traditional methods. Metro recognizes that there are many communities without equal, daily access to the range of social media sites in use. Therefore, the development of each specific community outreach and engagement plan includes the assessment of how best to effectively communicate with technology within low-income, Limited English Proficiency and communities of color, coupled with outreach methods to engage people with disabilities, historically excluded communities, and general population stakeholders. This combined approach provides meaningful and broad public access to the public process. Strategies for public participation will vary depending on the scope and breadth of the project and on what is known to be familiar and accessible locations, forms, and forums for communication.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

The recommendation supports strategic plans:

Goal #1: Provide high quality mobility options that enable people to spend less time traveling. Improving the speed and reliability of the bus network will reduce transit travel times, and improve competitiveness with other transportation options.

Goal #2: Deliver outstanding trip experiences for all users of the transportation system. These initiatives help move more people within the same street capacity, where transit users currently suffer service delays and reliability issues because of single occupant drivers.

Goal #3: Enhance communities and lives through mobility and access to opportunity. With faster transit service and improved reliability, residents have increased access to education and employment, with greater confidence that they will reach their destination on time.

Goal #4: Transform Los Angeles County through regional collaboration and national leadership. Because Metro does not have jurisdiction over local streets and arterials, collaboration with other partner agencies such as LADOT, Caltrans, City and County of Los Angeles are necessary to ensure these speed and reliability improvements are successfully implemented.

NEXT STEPS

The NextGen Bus Speed Engineering Working Group will continue to discuss and analyze future corridors along key arterials for equitable opportunities and are actively collaborating with partner agencies and stakeholders. Staff plans to provide further details about these corridors in the next quarterly update in November/December 2021.

Additionally, Metro continues working with LADOT to improve existing Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and expand TSP to more buses and along non-TSP Tier 1 corridors under the NextGen Bus Plan. Today, only Metro Rapid (Red) buses receive TSP, which can extend green lights to prioritize certain buses. Given the NextGen Bus Plan to combine the best of Metro Rapid priority attributes with Metro Local access for all riders, Metro is exploring the viability to enable TSP on its entire 2,300 bus fleet

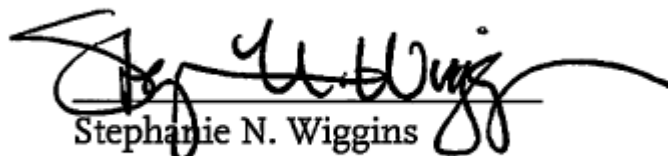
and work with LADOT to increase opportunities for Metro buses to receive signal prioritization along Metro Tier 1 bus routes.

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A - Motion 22.1

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